

# MCC Peace Section Task Force on Women in Church & Society REPORT

#42, March-April 1982

## Focus on Language

### Inclusiveness: A Symposium

**Introduction** To a wide swath of middle America and Canada, "Lincoln, Nebraska" brings to mind the "Back to the Bible" radio broadcast, and there it is on the corner of 12th and "M" streets with its modestly attractive revolving "tablet of stone" displaying sometimes a Bible verse. Twice in the last year I phoned the office to encourage changing "no man" to "no one" and "any man" to "anyone"; first it was John 14:6 and then it was 2 Corinthians 5:17.

"I understand your wanting to consistently use the King James Version," I said into the telephone, "but perhaps to more effectively communicate the Good News to *all* the people of Lincoln you would consider changing..." King James won both rounds.

I believe that it is important to use inclusive language. I believe that the woman-on-the-streets-of-Lincoln—especially the young woman, and most especially my twelve-year-old daughter—does not identify with or sense the Gospel in a sign that reads, "If any man be in Christ he is a new creation." In this case I would recommend the New English Bible: "When anyone is united to Christ, there is a new act of creation."

Housecleaning my own language continues. I am slowly excising the suffix -ess from my vocabulary. If you don't think it has a diminishing, even sexual, implication, try "waiter/waitress," "master/mistress." Some words, like "instructress," have fortunately died. Some, like "professoress," fortunately were never born.

I believe there is increasing expectation that inclusive language should be used. Slip-ups are now more glaring and less permissible. An (unnamed!) editor can never again get away with "she struggled manfully through a novel" or "she came through childbirth so well—she took it like a man." I also await the demise of such absurdities as "the John Joneses are parents of a new baby" and "we're going to visit the Joe Smiths" where women are simply invisible.

Five years ago *Report* focused on language. Last year at the March conference on Women in Ministry at Bethel College, Karen Goering Hostetler led a lively workshop on the subject; people left convinced that there was still work to be done. In the fall of 1981, Gloria

Kaufman of Indiana University spoke on "Sexist Language" at Goshen College's Women's Emphasis Week. To take a reading for 1982, I asked thirty-two people to describe why language is important to them, to describe their trek with the use of inclusive language, and to tell any stories they had on the subject. Here (alphabetically) are the responses, and an occasional self-portrait. —Muriel Thiessen Stackley

**Kristina Mast Burnett** Language is important to me because it's how we talk to each other, hear each other, know one another. "Inclusive language" is a painful subject for me. I am so tired of hearing people (men and women) make fun of women who care deeply about this. I try to use words that do not exclude women, but I no longer make an issue out of it—I guess I have not been faithful in this area. Yes, I do have a story to tell. "I Bind My Heart This Tide" is one of my favorite hymns—but, oh, the references to brothers and more brothers and never a sister mentioned. Occasionally when we sing this hymn in church I hear an undertone of dissent as some voices sing "sisters" where "brothers" appears in the copy. Sometimes I even join in and sing "to the brother far away, and the sister near at hand" and feel as if perhaps someday this will no longer be an issue; we will find new words that do not hurt or exclude.

**Edna Dyck** Word pictures as those painted by Keats, Michener, and others are as meaningful to me as canvases by Rembrandt or music by Beethoven. Also, language is important because working with words is my daily occupation and I truly enjoy my job. I became aware of inclusive language when I began working for the (General Conference Mennonite) Commission on Education where editors struggled daily to equalize the unequal. Now I flinch every time I hear or read examples of non-inclusive language. I feel fortunate to be in a position where I can monitor and change some of the non-inclusive language in curriculum and other reading material. Recently I changed "May we learn to listen to God and hear what he is saying to us" to "May we

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*The MCC Peace Section Task Force on Women in Church and Society (formed in 1973) believes that Christ Jesus teaches equality of all persons. It strives to promote this belief through sharing information, concerns, and ideas relating to problems and issues which affect the status of women in church and society.*

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learn to listen and hear what God is saying to us." A small but important difference—changing our image of God to a parent-figure rather than exclusively male.

**Jake Enz** Language is important to me because it affords the deepest interpenetration of lives possible. Language provides a natural basis for mingling lives for their mutual benefit, or for the disruption of lives with indescribably tragic consequences. For the latter, see Revelation 22:15, "...Everyone who loves and practices falsehood," in other words, the final and ultimate evil.

I hesitate to re-write hymns and Scripture. Let my life cherish women so that when I use hymns and Scripture I will not communicate disrespect. If I must use "he/she," let it rather be "she/he" to recognize an ages-long catching up. In all things let me be creatively sensitive and mostly listening.

Two of the most ancient parts of the Scriptures are the songs of Miriam and Deborah in Exodus 15 and Judges 5. Celebrating the Lord's deliverances, metaphors which really coined the theological words of the whole Bible were put into play. The delivering gospel was given by women. Poetry with song was the ministry of women. They did indeed give unity to history. The multiple divorcee in John 4 was first to receive the announcement of the Messiahship of Jesus and became the first witness to it. Women were the first to hear the announcement of the resurrection; they were not believed when they were its first witnesses!

**Jeannie Ewert** I have probably been too sheltered thus far to realize what an important issue this is. I am guilty of naively supposing that in what may well be this world's most traumatic age, issues such as nuclear proliferation and food-for-the-hungry must take precedence over the insistence of America's feminine population that they be given equal attention in the use of language. I realize this sounds harsh. Therefore, let me add that I believe that if we as Christian women will demonstrate Christ-like love and tolerance in word and deed, and will serve God in whatever way we can, this issue will take a background position in our own minds. I believe that if we approach the problem with a wrong attitude, it will never be solved. The gap of inequality can only be bridged by Christian love and selfless giving, and the way must at all times be illumined by God.

A word expressed/ Can cause another to be blessed,/ Or only further pain. So often hurt,/ by cruel word, or curt;/ I would not do the same. Oh, Lord, control/ The very rhythm of my soul,/ My self-expression tame.

**Margaret Foth** One recent Sunday morning our song leader suggested that we sing this one hymn, substituting the female pronoun for the male pronouns. Sure enough, that week some persons reported to him that they "didn't appreciate that exercise in women's lib."

It makes me angry. Sunday after Sunday I have joined with other men and women to sing the hymns of the church, all of which use the male pronouns, or the word "brother", when referring to persons, and the male

Carl Kreider's *The Christian Entrepreneur* (Herald Press, 1980) is possibly the first book by a Mennonite man that a woman can read from cover to cover without feeling either omitted or psychologically whacked at some point. —Elaine Sommers Rich in "Thinking with..." *Mennonite Weekly Review*.

pronouns or word "Father" when referring to God. I sing these hymns joyfully, for I worship in these concerted voices of past and present. But why can't my brothers join with me—joyfully—when on one Sunday we use female pronouns?

Increasingly I find myself becoming aware of the power of language to shape sub-conscious images. In our culture we ascribe certain qualities to "mother." Our continued use of the word "Father" in addressing and describing God forms a concept of God without those "mother" qualities. Who can imagine what increased wholeness of spiritual life we would know if the concepts of tenderness, constancy in caring, self-giving and empathy completed our most elemental concepts of God? What increased strength to the girls and women in our church if they were regularly affirmed as also being "in the image of God"?

**Reta Finger** Although language is not reality, it reflects reality. Language is our way of presenting images and concepts to each other. When language is predominately masculine, women and the feminine are rendered invisible. It would appear, without saying anything explicitly, that the masculine is the more important gender.

I often read a Scripture passage in our worship service. I make all the pronouns inclusive where that is the intent of the passage. Fortunately, no one seems offended, and I have received some positive responses. Unfortunately, few others seem to take that initiative when reading Scripture or leading singing—unless I prod them.

When raising children, the problem of sexist religious language comes to the fore. Images of God the Father are formed in the mind long before the concept of God as transcendent Spirit can be apprehended. I have two sons, now eight and ten years. Several years ago, in Sunday school they learned a mealtime song. After thanking God for the food, the song ended with, "We thank you, God, for being our Father." I suggested that sometimes we should sing, "We thank you, God, for being our Mother." It seemed more natural, since mothers usually do most of the food preparation in the family. This was met with great resistance by our boys, who insisted that God is not a mother. The text should not be changed; to them it was carved on tablets of stone. Besides, they insisted, God is a man because he looks like one. All the pictures portrayed God as a stately old man with gray hair, the elderly father of Jesus.

Thus are our earliest impressions of a male God formed, and how wrenchingly difficult to see God as feminine in any way, even as a mother feeding her children.

Thus was I as a parent thrown up against the difficulty of raising non-sexist children in a church that has not adequately imaged an inclusive God.

**Karen Goering Hostetler** Language is not the first issue that women process as they become more aware of the expectations that have been placed on them as women. Rather, it seems to me that language becomes an issue later as women are more in touch with a total picture and how language impacts on it....I have plenty of copies of "A Litany Affirming Who We Are," hymns, and bibliography. If people are interested, send a self-addressed stamped business envelope to me at 1305 Ruby, Kansas City, Kansas 66103.

**Gordon Houser** Language is important to me because it is one of the unique characteristics of humans that identify them as created in God's image, because it is a wonderful example of God's complex creativity, and because it provides a means not only of oppressing and alienating others but of bridging differences and building unity among peoples of varying backgrounds.

I used language largely exclusively, as did most people, in ignorance and apathy for many years. I, too, used to joke about a "mail-person." But as I studied language in college (majoring in linguistics) my understanding of both its universality and complexity, of its volatile nature, of its power to influence people, and of its potential for beauty grew. One of the tenets of linguistic study is that language is to be *described*, not *prescribed*. At the same time, as Dwight Bolinger has written in *Aspects of Language*, "The more we know about how existing styles of speech...mold us as speakers the more we are forced to judge the way society guage by saying that people use words, words don't use people. "But this is like saying that people use guns, guns don't use people—the *availability* of guns is one factor in their use" (Bolinger). Our verbal habits have trapped us into a set of attitudes from which we can free ourselves only by earnest attention to both the attitudes and the words.

Since graduation nearly six years ago, my sensitivity toward exclusive language has deepened through encounters with women who feel excluded by certain verbal habits, through my study of theology, through my work in styling for a magazine, where I am challenged to make exclusive terms more inclusive, and most of all through my relationship with God, where my own exclusive attitudes are confronted and where I've become more comfortable in addressing God as Mother and Father.

**Alfred Krass** Language is a big part of my trade. I use words, written and spoken, to move people to work at social change. Language is also important to me because the biblical God reveals his/her self through words; it was, furthermore, "the Word" which became flesh.

I began by thinking that the critique of accepted usage was absurd, even laughable. I then went through a period of "making concessions to the women." Finally I realized that I was entirely wooden in my idea of what language is and that what was going on was simply a change in usage which expressed a new sensibility.

Once I lectured at a church conference. Afterwards a woman came up to me and thanked me for my words, but went on to say, "What you said was, however, completely inaccessible to me because of your use of exclusive language." I thought to myself, "What a liar you are" but promised, without a drop of sincerity, to think about changing. It took me two more years to realize that what I had said was indeed inaccessible to her, as inaccessible as using the word "Negro" now would make my thoughts inaccessible to blacks.

**Virginia Ramey Mollenkott** Language is important to me because my own experience teaches me that unconscious-mind imagery affects human life either positively or negatively. My fundamentalist upbringing placed in my deep mind an image of a white, rich, male God (racism, classism, and sexism in one neat package). Christian feminism has liberated me from the idolatry of the maleness, whiteness, and richness; the practical effects in my life have been powerful.

At first as a feminist I was willing to call myself a son of God as Christian men would call themselves the bride of Christ. But other Christian women were so upset with me for "wiping out our identity as Christian women" that I abandoned androgyny as a tactic and began, in response to their pain, to campaign for *truly inclusive* language everywhere (i.e., "offspring of God" or "sons and daughters of God").

I have a couple of stories. A letter in a Church of the Brethren publication protested that there is no need to change the name of the church because the word "Brethren" is already inclusive. As proof, the letter-writer said that the Brethren have always included their *wives* in all denominational considerations.

And, after I had spoken on inclusive language as a justice issue in a local mainline church, an elderly man, obviously angry, hissed at me as he left the church door, "About your book title *Women, Men, and the Bible*—you've got the order wrong!"

### A Model of Language



From John B. Carroll, *The Study of Language*, Harvard, 1953, p. 10



**Peggy Newcomer** Language defines reality; it draws thought into form to be shared. Language is so crucial that in John's gospel the manifestation of Christ is Word. Advocating inclusiveness is not petty; it's central.

When singing a hymn with exclusive language, I substitute on the spot: "Rise Up, All You of God."

Marge Piercy's science-fiction book, *Woman on the Edge of Time*, postulates a civilization in a future century where a neutral, third person pronoun, "Per," prevails. It functions as both subject and object: "Per said," and "I gave it to per."

**J. Lorne Peachey** Language is important to me because 1) I make my living from it; 2) it's fun to work with because it has so many possibilities for creatively expressing oneself; and 3) it's the only way we humans have of living together, so if there is any hope for peace and justice in our world it must come about as we use our language to communicate with each other and try to understand each other. That's why inclusive language is important. It's not just the words that one says; rather, it's what one communicates by those words about acceptance and understanding and empathy for another.

I came to consciousness about language through my role as an editor, but not through high-powered argument or arm twisting by pressure groups. In fact, I think argument gets you hardly anywhere when it comes to language. People on both sides with "good" reasons will argue for keeping the language "pure" or for opening it up for "justice" reasons. My position has been that if anyone is hurting, then it is my responsibility as an editor to do all in my power to help heal that hurt by using language which will do so. In other words, if there are people in the church who are hurting because of male-dominated language, then I do what I can to ease that hurt by not using that language. And if done well, no one will pay particular attention—both those who favor inclusive language, and those who are concerned about "pureness." That's the challenge of being an editor—not to offend with language while still being able to communicate values and concerns.

In *Christian Living* I've just decided to work on the language problem without any fanfare. And to date I've gotten very little reaction either way. The basis of the whole language argument seems to be relationships. If male-female relationships in our culture were truly on an equal level and we would treat one another as we should, then I don't think we would have a language problem. Conversely, because these relationships are today not what they should be, then one of the ways we work at healing the wounds is to work at language. But how is that done? I'd like to see us adopt "they" as both a singular and a plural pronoun, much like we have "you." Then we could say, "Each will bring their lunch," and never bat an eye. I haven't been able to solve this in my own magazine yet, but I keep working at it.

**Elaine Sommers Rich** As a writer I often spend a long time searching for just the right word, the exact word, the one with a subtle shade of meaning. "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us" says much to me about communication.

As a sixth-grader I read Second Timothy 2:15 ("Notwithstanding she shall be saved in childbearing...") and wrote in the margin of my Bible "and men through Christ?" I didn't know much about either theology or the English language. I have come to realize how inadequate language is for representing reality. Nevertheless we try. It is rather accidental that the German *mann* (one) became "man" in English. I don't feel excluded by words like "freshman" or "chairman." I do feel excluded by the language of some hymns. In "Be Thou My Vision" I sing "In Christ There Is No East Nor West" I sing "Join hands, then, sisters of the faith...Who serves my Father as His child...."

I soon notice whether a speaker uses inclusive or exclusive language. How refreshing it was to participate in worship services under the leadership of John Gaeddert at Council of Commissions meetings in Newton, Kansas, in February; he had us repeat together, e.g., "We are the children of God" (not "sons of God").

**Ruth Brunk Stoltzfus** Language can open wide the windows of understanding. Yet language can present problems. When Bible translators do mean for the word "man" in the generic sense to include "woman," many Bible teachers seem to understand the word to exclude "woman."

The verses about headship for men and silence for women are used as spectacles through which are viewed many verses such as I Corinthians 12:11 about the Spirit's gifts "to every man." Then women are excluded from the full use of their gifts. This, too, in spite of the many women in both Old and New Testaments who freely exercised their gifts of leadership.

Unlike my first copy, a recently-bought New International Version of the Bible now says in I Corinthians 12:11 that the Spirit gives gifts "to each one" instead of "to each man."

Women have had to do unending "translations" while reading all about "man" in the Scriptures and may not have gotten precise meanings intended for them. Ephesians 4:22-24 (KJV) tells us to put off "the old man" and put on "the new man." Our dear men might try to imagine being taught to put off "the old woman" and put on "the new woman." The light breaks in the newer translations that say, "...get rid of your old self,...put on the new self." This happened to me.

Jesus was a man, the God-man. How he understood and respected women and broke custom to do so! He taught us to call God "Father." I have no problems with that. I only have problems when we do not see the Bible teaching that God loves us like a father *and* like a

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*Language not only expresses ideas and concepts; it also shapes them. Often the process is unconscious. Yet language is so powerful in its imprint on the human mind that even the violated group may begin*

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*to accept the very expressions that aid in its stereotyping. Thus to change these expressions seems picky and unimportant.* —Rey O'Day Mawson, Women's Center for Theologizing Kansas City, Missouri.

To say "man" when God means "man and woman" is not only false, it can be oppressive. —Father Carroll Stuhlmuehler, C.P., professor of Old Testament Studies at Catholic Theological Union.

mother, when maleness is pushed so far that not only is God male but male is God. That's too much to take.

**Jeannie Zehr** Language isn't as important to me now as it was in the past. I'm to the point where I feel that I see and experience the most progress for women's and men's growth and wholeness when I do my "work" gently and quietly. The secular world's crusaders stir up dust and we suffer the conservative backlash. So, gently moving forward seems to me to end up forward, whereas pushy, belligerent "forward" movement often ends up six steps forward and seven backwards with some folks.

As editor of *Window to Mission* I also became aware of how broad the spectrum of attitudes is across the General Conference. I constantly need to be aware that I'm editor just as much for Ms. Yoder on one end of the spectrum as for Miss Yoder on the other end.

## Symposium Participants

**Kristina Mast Burnett**, Akron, Pennsylvania, is director of Information Services for Mennonite Central Committee.

**Edna Dyck**, Newton, Kansas, is revision editor of the Foundation Series church school curriculum.

**Jake Enz** teaches Hebrew and Old Testament at Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminaries. He will also answer to "Mr. Joan Enz."

**Jeannie Ewert**, Lincoln, Nebraska, is a college freshman and has been known to wish that she could be an usher in her church.

**Margaret Foth**, Harrisonburg, Virginia, is writer and speaker for "Your Time," Mennonite Broadcasts.

**Reta Finger**, Chicago, Illinois, is editorial coordinator of *Daughters of Sarah*, a biblical feminist magazine.

**Karen Goering Hostetler**, Kansas City, Kansas, is a resource person on inclusive language.

**Gordon Houser**, Newton, Kansas, is editorial assistant for *The Mennonite*.

**Alfred Krass**, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, is editor-at-large of *The Other Side* and an urban minister.

**Virginia Ramey Mollenkott**, Dewitt, New Jersey, is a professor of English, an author, and member of the National Council of Churches Committee to prepare an Inclusive Language Lectionary.

**Peggy Newcomer**, Seattle, Washington, likes to be known as a generic person.

**J. Lorne Peachey**, Scottdale, Pennsylvania, is editor of *Christian Living* magazine.

**Elaine Sommers Rich**, Bluffton, Ohio, is a writer, presently teaching creative writing at Bluffton College.

**Ruth Brunk Stoltzfus**, Toledo, Ohio, is interim pastor of Bancroft Mennonite Church.

**Jeannie Zehr**, Fort Wayne, Indiana, is editor of *Window to Mission*, bi-monthly magazine of Women in Mission.

## Resources

*Because We Are One People: Songs for Worship*. Ecumenical Women's Centers, 1653 W. School St., Chicago, IL.

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Scanzoni, Letha, and Hardesty, Nancy. *All We're Meant to Be: A Biblical Approach to Women's Liberation*. Word, 1974.

Shutt, Joyce M. "Words—Walls or Bridges?" *Report* #15. Ibid.

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## News and Verbs

By-law #14's revision changes Mennonite Central Committee's constitution so that it is now inclusive: "Chairman" is now "chairperson," "his successor" is now "a successor." Says Chair Elmer Neufeld, "If we can avoid offense by changing our language a bit, we should do that."

Pope John Paul II has spoken: in the Roman Catholic mass, "to you and all men" can now be changed "to you and all."

Marion Keeney Preheim's book *Overseas Manual*, published by Herald Press for Mennonite Central Committee, has sold over 5,000 copies.

The Western District Ministerial Committee has copies of Alvin Beachy's paper, "Do the Scriptures Support or Oppose the Ordination of Women: An Inquiry Based Upon A Christological Interpretation of the Bible." Copies may be purchased for \$1.50 each from the Western District Conference Office, Box 306, North Newton, KS 67117. The study will be described fully in the May-June *Report* focusing on ordination.

Leah Sonwani is studying at Mennonite Biblical Seminary this year and next, assisted in sponsorship by

Women in Mission, General Conference Mennonite Church, in keeping with a goal for the 1980s: to strengthen relationships with women abroad. Leah is concentrating on Anabaptist studies. In India she has been a teacher of English, Hindi, and Sanskrit. She is a member of the Bharatiya Mennonite Church.

Laurie Wolfe, librarian at Mennonite Library and Archives, North Newton, Kansas, created an exhibit on Mennonite women in honor of National Women's History Week, 7-13 March. Both published and unpublished photographs and printed material was included. The Showalter Oral History Collection was a resource.

"Mennonite Women's Story: a Search for Sources" is a project for 1982 and 1983 of the General Conference Mennonite Heritage Committee in cooperation with Women in Mission. A three-fold brochure describes the search for written and graphic material produced by, for, and about women. Free copies of the brochure can be had from Heritage Committee, 722 Main, Newton, KS 67114.

Mary M. Good died in January in Goshen, Indiana. Her working years were spent in orphanage work, teaching and administration for Mennonite Board of Missions in India.

Language is revelatory. It can offer us clues to our own unconscious attitudes. I remember conversations with two older male friends, both of whom used euphemisms for "woman." One referred to someone as a "girl" (I later discovered she was over fifty years old, and when I asked why he used the term he said he thought women liked to be thought of as young.) The other man consistently used "lady." (He wanted to

show respect.) Both had "good intentions," but in recalling youth, sexual and intellectual immaturity (girl), and helplessness and response to flattery (lady), the words convey notions of irresponsibility and frivolity. What underlying attitudes—protectiveness, sexual embarrassment, superiority—lurk in such words? —Gayle Gerber Koontz, *Report*, July 1977.



Three World Council of Churches' consultations on the place of women and men in the church (in Klingenthal, France, August 1979; in Niederaltaich, Federal Republic of Germany, August 1980; and in Amsterdam, Netherlands, December 1981) have consensed: "The changing situation of women in the secular world demands a new reading of women in Scripture. Many biblical passages portray women as strong willing to confront injustice, and challenge authority." The study's culminating international consultation will take place in Sheffield, England, 10-19 July 1982.

**Ruth Erb**, 53, died in January in Goshen, Indiana. She spent thirty years in Argentina as a missionary.

**Katie Funk Wiebe** of Hillsboro, Kansas, will be the featured speaker at the Northern District Women's Retreat, 11 and 12 September 1982, at Swan Lake Christian Camp, Viborg, South Dakota.

**Delores Histand Friesen** of Iowa City, Iowa, led a "More with Less" retreat at Swan Lake Christian Camp in March.

**Dorothy Yoder Nyce**, part-time instructor and pastoral counselor at Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminaries, led a Bible study on the book of Jeremiah in January at Faith Mennonite Church in Newton, Kansas.

*Some language changes can be incorporated into our liturgy and music without doing violence to the meaning or sound of the original. Some language changes can best reflect our concerns if we add words rather than substitute. For example, to substitute "Parent God" or "Father God" is to sacrifice vividness and emotional warmth. Instead, we might feel free to also address "Mother God," as the Bible, at least implicitly does.* —David Ewert, "Reflections on Sexist Language," *The Mennonite*, 5 January 1982.

### Correction

Three lines were inadvertently omitted from Mary Kerbs' article "Mennonite Mutual Aid: More Than Just Insurance," in *Report* #41 focusing on women and health. The corrected sentences read: "...MMA established a policy of placing a two-year waiting period on benefits for repeat C-section expenses, reasoning that other Association members should not be asked to share these expenses soon after a new member enrolled, especially when these expenses could be planned for in advance." And "...My supervisor, a division vice president, admits feeling a 'tinge of guilt' because women are not more involved in management, but the nature of the staff simply reflects the nature of applicants, he explains. For example, a middle-management position currently open has received applications from twelve males and two females, so it is likely a male eventually will fill that position."

Eleven Mennonite women pastors from Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois met in January in Elkhart, Indiana, prior to the annual Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminaries pastors' workshop to resource and support each other in their ministries.

**Bev Lord** of Seattle, Washington, was elected as member-at-large at the Mennonite Central Committee (U.S.) annual meeting at Milford, Nebraska, in January. **Frances Greaser**, representing the Mennonite Church, was elected to the executive committee. Frances is also member-at-large of the bi-national MCC organization. Other women on the 38-member bi-national organization are **Florence Driedger** of Canada and **Frances Jackson**, **Anna Juhnke**, and **Marie Wiens** of the United States.

Three women are in the group of eight Europeans speaking in the United States in March and April on "The Role of the Church in the European Peace Movement": **Toni Liversage** of Denmark, one of the founders of "No to Nuclear Weapons," an organizer of the Copenhagen-to-Paris peace march a year ago, and speaker at the Bonn peace rally in October 1981; **Sienie Strikwerda** of the Netherlands, former chair of the Christian Women's Organization of the Netherlands and a board member of the Dutch Broadcasting Company; and **Dorothee Solle** of West Germany, lecturer on the theological faculty of University of Hamburg, visiting professor of systematic Theology at Union Theological Seminary in New York, and speaker at the Bonn disarmament rally in October 1981.

**Tillie Wall** of Orland, California, has retired after thirty-five years in nursing and public health ministries at Kikwit, Zaire, headquarters of that nation's Mennonite Brethren Church. —*Mennonite Weekly Review*, 4 March 1982.

**Ardith Frey** of Elmira, Ontario, is Somalia Country Representative for Mennonite Central Committee.

**Beulah S. Hostetler** is one of two new members elected to Eastern Mennonite College and Seminary Board of Trustees. She is vice chair of the Council of Faith, Life, and Strategy of the Mennonite Church.

The sixth Women in Ministry Conference will convene 15-17 October 1982 at Rockway Mennonite Collegiate, Kitchener, Ontario, the first to be held in Canada. A local planning committee with Mennonite Church, General Conference Mennonite Church, Mennonite Brethren, and Brethren in Christ representation, is planning the program and arranging the hosting. Information can be had from **Ed Kauffman**, 74 Erb's Road East, St. Agatha, Ontario N0B 2L0.

**Rebekah Basinger**, director of public relations at Tabor College received an award of excellence for her work in

the 1981 Tabor catalog. The award was granted by the Council for Advancement and Support of Education, District VI.

**Melita Rempel** of Winnipeg, Manitoba, is a Mennonite Central Committee (U.S.) volunteer with the Louisiana Coalition on Jails and Prisons, the only prisoner advocacy group in the state. She receives thirty-fifty letters and phone calls and visits each week from prisoners or their families affected by the state's six

## Quotes

**A language in need of scrubbing:** *Why did Matthew include four women in Jesus' genealogy? "The first proposal, already espoused by Jerome is that the four Old Testament women were regarded as sinners; and their inclusion foreshadowed for Matthew's readers the role of Jesus as Savior of sinful men."*—Raymond E. Brown in *The Birth of the Messiah* (Doubleday, 1977).

**A language in need of scrubbing:** *"...O'Brien and his co-chairperson, Congressman Yvonne Braithwaite... were on television constantly."*—From *Grassroots, the Autobiography of George McGovern* otherwise impeccably written and edited (Random House, 1977).

*There are places in the Bible where past translators, who lived in male-dominated cultures, inserted masculine nouns and pronouns not found in the original texts. [John 1:12, 1 John 3:1, 1 Tim. 3:5; 1 Tim. 3:1] There are also places where the Hebrew word ish or the Greek word anthrōpos can be translated accurately as "those" instead of "man." For example, in Psalm 1, the committee [to produce an inclusive-language translation of the lectionary] voted to change "Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked" to "Blessed are those who walk not...."*—National Council of Churches, Division of Education and Ministry.

*The biblical word is a deed of love. The word and a hug—these are the ultimate weapons!*—Jake Enz

*Jesus, by using the mother hen imagery, provides a corrective, so to speak, for both women and men to appreciate. (That is, if women accept a father image as God, why not expect men to accept a mother image for God?) Today, new perceptions of Jesus and the images he used for God are helping Christians see broader characteristics of God. By opening our mental eyes to the mother hen figure of speech, we see these attributes of God: caring, protecting, all-knowing, calling and gathering, nurturing but permitting growth.*—Rachel Conrad Wahlberg

prisons. She says, "I have a sense of the real evil in the world, and how strong it is. It will be a long time before an evil system (of criminal justice) is changed. In the meantime I need to identify places of the worst suffering to make a small difference to a few people."—*MCC News Service*

**Mary Anne Hildebrand** of Winkler, Manitoba, conducts sewing and handicraft classes in Lusaka, Zambia—another project of Mennonite Central Committee. Mary Anne says, "Where women used to be the chief providers of food for their families, working their gardens and pounding maize, they now have little to do" having come to the city in hopes of finding jobs. One woman made herself a pair of knitting needles out of old wire when none were available for purchase. —*MCC News Service*

**Beulah S. Hostetler** of Willow Grove, Pennsylvania, was featured speaker of the Lancaster Mennonite Historical Society in March. Her subject was the influence of fundamentalism on eastern Pennsylvania Mennonites from 1890 to 1950.

**Gayle and Ted Koontz** have been appointed to Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminaries faculty in ethics and historical theology. Gayle is a former member of the MCC women's task force and former editor of *Report*.

Women in Mission vice president **Elsie Flaming** and coordinator **Joan Wiebe** visited missionaries and national women in General Conference Mennonite churches in Japan, Taiwan, and Hong Kong during 1981.

**Kimuka Mbonza (Mazemba)** of Zaire has accompanied her husband on a visit to North American churches. Women in Mission assisted in the funding.

**Anita Froese**, president of Conference of Mennonites in Canada Women in Mission, addressed the CMC board and staff members, opening annual sessions in January 1982 in Winnipeg. Her three points were: 1) service is love in working clothes; 2) real service is working with the Lord, not for the Lord; and 3) there is no limit to the potential of our service in Christ.

**Pearl P. Schrack**, Telford, Pennsylvania, has been named to the Mennonite Board of Education from Region V of the Mennonite Church. She succeeds A. Grace Wenger of Leola, Pennsylvania. She is supervisor of language arts in the North Penn School District.

American Broadcasting Company's "Directions" examined the force of feminism in religion on a program aired 28 February 1982. Featured were **Sister Shirley Koritnik** of Sisters of Charity and executive director of Ecumedia of Kansas City; **Valerie Russell**, president of City Missionary Society of Boston; and **Sarah Bentley**,



a minister of the United Church of Christ and teacher at Union Theological Seminary.

**Dorothy Friesen**, resource coordinator for Chicago's Synapses and teacher in the Urban Life Center, was the featured speaker at Bluffton Colleges Peace Emphasis Day in February.

**Suzann Bauman** of the Salem congregation, Elida, Ohio, is the newly-appointed head of the Lima Victim-Offender Reconciliation Program.

State senator **Shirley Marsh** of Lincoln, Nebraska, sponsored the 1979 law that eliminated non-essential

references to gender in state statutes. Thus, Nebraska law books now refer to "his or her" where they used to refer to "his." What once was "fireman" is now "fire-fighter"; "policemen" are now "police officers."

**Linea Geiser** of Elkhart, Indiana, has found a way to memorize the psalms in Hebrew: set them to melodie

memorize the psalms in Hebrew: set them to melodies that she composed.

If you have news or verbs that you would like to share with the other 1,650 readers of *Report*, send them to me at 4830 Woodland Avenue, Lincoln, NE 68516.—mts

## Letters

Regarding inclusive language, I have done a few things in our worship format: In Psalm 8 "he" was changed to plural "we." ("Who are we that you, Lord, are mindful of us?") The creed, beginning "This is the good news which we received..." added one word, "Mary." I don't say anything about it; we just read. But it's a thrill to hear an entire congregation read "Jesus appeared to Peter, Mary, the twelve, and many faithful witnesses." I also frequently use a benediction, "May the God of Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebekah, Jacob and Rachel..." —*Emma Richards, Lombard, Illinois*

"Singleness and Single Parenting" [November-December 1981] is a subject which screams to be addressed, particularly in the church....This edition of *Report* should help. In this connection let me also confess that we as church agencies (MCC in particular) have been guilty of underestimating and inadequately recognizing the role of single workers, particularly women. This was impressed on me on my recent trip to Africa and specifically on a side trip to a remote area of Ethiopia where we are being very well represented by four courageous single women....However [I question] the feature in *Report* headed "News and Verbs." I would not support a similar exclusive listing of men's activities and I am wondering how much longer we will need this exclusive listing of women's activities? We continue to work toward an integrated society, do we not, in which both women and men are adequately recognized? I realize that progress is slow and I don't blame you for some impatience, and I hope that my raising this question is not misunderstood. —*Edgar Stoesz, Akron, Pennsylvania*

I'd like to share three stories. One is the story of a middle-aged woman, the second of an older woman, and the third one of a teenager. These stories are all different. They are all the same. They are all true. They are all Mennonite.

When I met Anna, as I shall call her, we walked through her garage which was empty of cars but full of

soap: blocks and blocks of soap. Outside was a large kettle where she boiled soap for MCC. She has lost count of the pounds of soap she has made for MCC. But this paled in significance in comparison to what I was about to discover. Through another venture she had raised many thousands of dollars for a church project that faced an early demise in a sea of red ink; she founded and continued to chair an auxillary for a Mennonite senior citizens' home so successfully that she was asked to do so to start a second home. She teaches Sunday classes. When the "boat people" arrived earlier than expected she invited a whole family to live with her family—which they did for over a month. With sign language she taught them many things, including that you don't scrape table scraps onto the floor for the chickens to pick up. She continues to be responsible for taking the family to the doctor, dentist, employment offices. She chaired a committee whose chair was automatically the delegate to the regional conference. But when conference time arrived she was informed that someone else would be sent in her place; she was a woman. And a woman was not allowed to be a delegate.

I'll call the second woman Sarah. She went off to a Mennonite college when few people in her area even finished high school. She returned to her home church eager to contribute to the life of her congregation. The deacon came to her home on a number of occasions (when her husband was at work and could not come to her defense, she says) and informed her that if she had remarks to make at the annual meeting she was to tell her husband and let him speak. Her duty was to keep a good house and not to speak at meetings. She feels not only sorrow but guilt. Sorrow for the denial of her gifts and guilt because her son has totally rejected the church because, she concludes, of how he saw the church treat her.

Story Three. I end with this one for where there in youth there is hope. Despair has been replaced with understanding. But the initial despair was sexism and sexist language in her church.

Why am I telling you these stories? These are Mennonite heroines whose stories should be told. These

women have not left the church but continue to worship and contribute as they are able.

Ha adam was made/in the image of God/ za bar and nege bar/were they created/Will Menno is/deny ishsha/forever?—Name withheld, Canada.

## Quote

*Masculine terms are understood by many women (and men) as exclusive of women and therefore should not be used if inclusion of women is the spirit to be conveyed by the language. —Marcia Regier Stoesz*

## Announcement

The Mennonite Central Committee Task Force on Women has, in the past, responded to issues of women in church and society through scholarly research and study papers. The task force is now soliciting creative responses to the same concerns in the form of short stories, poetry, dramas, ink sketches, song, and black/white photos. Please send contributions to Esther Wiens by 1 June 1982 for consideration in a published collection of "artists' approach to women's concerns." Esther's address is Mennonite Brethren Bible College, 77 Henderson Highway, Winnipeg, Manitoba R2L 1L1.

## Looking Ahead

Forthcoming Reports will focus on:

Ordination, May-June 1982, Martha Smith Good, coordinator;

Human Sexuality, July-August 1982, Bertha Beachy, coordinator;

Peace and the Power of the Housewife, September-October 1982, Edith Krause and Muriel Thiessen Stackley, coordinators;

Two-career Marriages, November-December 1982, Rosie Epp, coordinator;

Nurturing Children, January-February 1983, Karen Neufeld, coordinator;

Women Mystics and Devotional Life, March-April 1983, Esther Wiens, coordinator.

The Report is a bi-monthly publication of the MCC Peace Section Task Force on Women in Church and Society. Correspondence should be sent to Editor Muriel Thiessen Stackley, 4830 Woodland, Lincoln, NE 68516.

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